

Aglaonema modestum Chinese Evergreen¹

Edward F. Gilman²

Introduction

Easily grown, the attractive plants eventually form substantial clumps of green stems with 10 to 14-inch-long, shiny, deep green leaves (Figure 1). This lends a tropical characteristic to any shaded area planted with Chinese Evergreen. The plant requires shade making it well-suited to low light conditions for house plants or sheltered, outdoor northern exposures. Temperatures below 45°F can injure the foliage.

General Information

Scientific name: *Aglaonema modestum*

Pronunciation: ag-lay-o-NEE-muh mo-DESS-tum

Common name(s): Chinese Evergreen

Family: *Araceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium



Figure 1. Chinese Evergreen.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

1. This document is FPS25, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date October 1999. Revised May 2007. Reviewed June 2011. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Any fertile, nematode-free soil or artificial media is suitable for growth, yet *Aglaonemas* will survive in peat and perlite, in sand, or can be grown hydroponically. They enjoy moist soil which is allowed to dry slightly before watering. Be careful not to overwater but do not let the soil dry for more than a few days. *Aglaonemas* require shade since direct sun will turn leaves yellow. They perform admirably in conditions too dark for most other tropicals. They will succeed in low light, either as house plants or in sheltered locations on the north side of buildings, or under heavy shade of trees. They are attractive planted as single specimens, or in mass to create a tropical, coarse-textured effect. Plant on two- to three-foot centers. Temperatures below 45°F. can injure the foliage. Overwatering causes root rot and yellowing of the leaves.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Soil-borne nematodes and mites can be a problem for Chinese Evergreen.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Roots can rot if the soil is kept too wet.